



**STARS COME OUT:** Vietnamese pop singers Thanh Bui and Thu Minh are part of the Wilderness Foundation's Forever Wild Rhino Protection Initiative  
Picture: BRIAN WITBOOI

## Rhinos the real stars for pop singers

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THEIR involvement in a campaign to curb rhino poaching turned into a spiritual experience for two Vietnamese pop singers at the weekend.

Thu Minh, 37, and Thanh Bui, 31, spent the weekend at the Shwari Game Reserve with the Wilderness Foundation, shooting videos and pictures to be used for an extensive public awareness campaign in Vietnam, aimed at reducing the demand for rhino

horn and other similar products in the country.

Although she sometimes struggled with her English, Minh had no trouble in expressing the amazing feelings she experiences working with the Forever Wild Rhino Protection Initiative.

"Being that close to a rhino – touching it, feeling its warmth and heartbeat, seeing the great body move as it breathed. Just feeling this incredible life under my hand was amazing."

Admitting with embarrassment that she, up to her visit to

South Africa, believed some of the myths surrounding rhino horn, Minh said she now saw the value of the campaign.

Bui said they needed to educate people as much as possible to dispel the myths of rhino horn curing cancer or helping with sexual impotence. He added that the campaign should be targeted at wealthier people in Vietnam.

"Rhino products are fairly expensive, and often using them is seen as a status symbol."

According to Wilderness Foundation chief executive Andrew

Muir a dead rhino is worth more than a live one, as rhino horn is sold for \$65 000 per kilogram (R680 000) on the black market.

"What we are facing is not a Vietnamese problem, or a Chinese problem, or even a South African problem. We are up against a criminal problem with world-wide syndicates involved. But every bit we do helps.

"We might not have success tomorrow, or a year from now. Fighting this battle is going to take time, but we are determined to save our rhinos."